

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES



NEWS RELEASE

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Prince William Sound Salmon Fishery News Release #44

BERING RIVER DISTRICT: The Bering River District will open at 7:00 am on Thursday, August 2 for a 36-hour period. For the week ending July 21, the Bering River District survey count was 9,900 versus a minimum anticipated goal of 14,400 sockeye salmon. During this survey, observational conditions for Bering River District systems were fair. Another survey of the Bering River District is anticipated to be flown this week.

COPPER RIVER DISTRICT: The Copper River District will open at 7:00 am on Thursday, August 2 for a 36-hour period. The Miles Lake Sonar was pulled on Thursday July, 26 with a final cumulative total of 1,294,400 fish whereas the minimum anticipated count to this date is 649,454 fish. The preliminary harvest estimate from the 36-hour period that closed on Tuesday, July 31 is 2,500 sockeye and 900 coho salmon with 27 deliveries reported. The Gulkana Hatchery sockeye salmon harvest contribution from the fishing period that closed on July 20 was 23%. For the week ending July 21, the Copper River Delta survey count was 44,100 versus a minimum anticipated goal of 32,100 sockeye salmon. During this survey observational conditions on the Copper River Delta were fair. An aerial survey of the Copper River Delta is anticipated to be flown this week.

ESHAMY DISTRICT: The Eshamy District **within the Main Bay Subdistrict and MBH THA and SHA, excluding the AGZ**, will open to commercial gillnet harvest for a 48-hour period starting at 8:00 am on Thursday, August 2. The AGZ up to a line of buoys in front of the barrier seine will open to DRIFT GILLNET permit holders only during this fishing period. Harvest from the period that closed Saturday, July 28 was 300 chum, 5,400 sockeye, and 3,700 pink salmon with 81 deliveries reported. PWSAC is anticipated to remove the hatchery barrier seine on Thursday, August 2. **The potential for expanded fishing opportunity in the AGZ on Friday, August 3 will be announced on Thursday, August 2.**

SEINE FISHERIES: An aerial survey of the Southwestern, Montague and Southeastern districts was flown yesterday. Aerial surveys of the Eastern, Northern Unakwik, Coghill, Northwest and Eshamy districts are scheduled for this week.

VFDA has recommended standing down in Port Valdez to allow for the accumulation of pink salmon needed for broodstock. VFDA estimates approximately 350,000 pink salmon secured for broodstock near the Solomon Gulch Hatchery. VFDA's broodstock needs are approximately 346,000 pink salmon. VFDA does not anticipate recommending a Port Valdez pink salmon clean up fishery at this time. PWSAC began its pink salmon cost recovery program at AFK, CCH, and WNH on Thursday, July 26. Actual harvest of cost recovery pink salmon at PWSAC's AFK Hatchery and WNH began on Monday, July 30. No cost recovery harvest reports have been provided by PWSAC, however it is believed that approximately 30% of the assigned pink salmon revenue goal has been collected through July 31. Cost recovery fishing is ongoing as of this morning. Future CPF openings targeting PWSAC enhanced pink salmon will be determined by cost recovery fishing progress and run entry. **The earliest possible announcement for CPF openings targeting PWSAC enhanced pink salmon in hatchery subdistricts is anticipated for Friday, August 3.** ADF&G test fishing in the Southwestern District began on July 23, gauging pink salmon run entry and stock composition. The maximum set size has increased to approximately 2,800 pink salmon. The three-set total catch for July 31 was approximately 3,500 pink salmon. For this same date, historical daily pink salmon catches in the test fishery range from 500 fish in 2008 to 4,700 fish in 2010. Stock contribution estimates from Tuesday, July 31 were 71% hatchery stock origin (SGH= 0%, CCH= 13%, WNH= 24%, and AFK hatchery = 34%) and 29% wild stock origin. Samples of pink salmon caught on July 29 resulted in an estimated 38% female, with a total sample size of 96 fish. This sex ratio estimate is comprised of a wide variety of stocks, and is therefore not directly applicable to hatchery run entry progress.

The commercial harvest estimate from the 60-hour period in the Coghill District north of Point Pakenham that ended on Monday, July 30 was approximately 1,500 chum, 220 sockeye, and 44,800 pink salmon with 27 deliveries reported.

As a reminder, **all salmon that are harvested but not sold by commercial permit holders in Alaska waters must be reported on a fish ticket at the time of landing (5AAC 39.130(c)(10))**. Fish tickets have a “not sold/personal use” field to report these salmon.

The next scheduled salmon fisheries announcement is anticipated to be at 2:00 pm Thursday, August 2. Permit holders are advised that unscheduled announcements based on current escapement data may occur at any time inseason.

Announcement recordings are available for **gillnet fisheries at 907-424-7535 and seine fisheries at 907-424-7345. In addition, announcement recordings are available in Anchorage at 267-2843.**

Additionally, announcements, inseason harvest data, and escapement data are available at the following web addresses:
<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareacopperriver.main> (Copper River homepage) or
<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareapws.main> (Prince William Sound homepage).

Unless otherwise specified, all openings are clock openings based on Alaska Daylight Time, which is based on Coordinated Universal Time and may be obtained by calling 303-499-7111.

The department encourages commercial permit holders to renew their licenses early and to check their CFEC vessel registration stickers to make sure that they are current.

The department also encourages permit holders to report observed violations to Wildlife Safeguard at 800-478-3377. Reports are anonymous and cash rewards may be paid for successful prosecution of violations.

PWS commercial fishers are reminded that area fisheries often necessitate fishing in close proximity to marine mammals. Under the Marine Mammals Protection Act (MMPA), the PWS drift gillnet fishery is classified as a Category II fishery. Participants in Category I and II fisheries must be registered in the Marine Mammal Avoidance Program (MMAP) to be authorized for lawful incidental, but not intentional, marine mammal takes during fishing. However, this authorization explicitly does **not** exempt holders of commercial fishing permits from the MMPA prohibition on takes of marine mammals listed as endangered or threatened under the Endangered Species Act. As a participant in the PWS drift gillnet fishery you are automatically registered in the Marine Mammal Authorization Program (MMAP) by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). As a participant in a Category II fishery, you must:

- Maintain an MMAP Authorization Certificate, or a photocopy, on board the vessel while engaging in any of the fisheries identified on the reverse side of the certificate. For non-vessel or set net fisheries, the enclosed Certificate, or a photocopy, must be in the possession of the permit holder during fishing operations. This Certificate, in combination with a current, valid state or Federal fishing permit, will serve as your authorization to incidentally take non-endangered or non-threatened marine mammals in the course of commercial fishing operations.
- Report all injuries and mortalities of marine mammals within 48 hours of returning from the trip during which these takes occurred using the MMAP Mortality/Injury Reporting Form (visit http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/pdfs/interactions/mmap_reporting_form.pdf for a copy).
- If so requested, take an observer aboard your vessel.

Purse seine and set gillnet gear are classified as a category III fisheries under the MMPA. Category III fishery participants are automatically exempted from the incidental take prohibition in the MMPA. Therefore, you do not need to maintain the MMAP certificate aboard your vessel, but must report any incidental takes of marine mammals within 48 hours of the incident or your return to port. Such reports must be made on the Marine Mammals Authorization Program Mortality/Injury Reporting Form.

Because some marine mammals are also listed under the Endangered Species Act, incidental takes are also regulated under that act and are not authorized. **All MMPA category fisheries are liable for incidentally taking ESA listed species.**

Please reference http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/pdfs/esa_factsheet.pdf for a list of marine mammals currently listed under the ESA (you should periodically check with the National Marine Fisheries Service for any changes in listed species). Under the ESA, take means to “harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect, or to attempt to engage in any such conduct.” 16U.S.C. 1532(19); and harass means an “intentional or negligent act or omission which creates the likelihood of injury to the wildlife by annoying it to such an extent as to significantly disrupt normal behavioral patterns which include, but are not limited to, breeding, feeding, or sheltering.” (50 C.F.R. 17.3).

To reduce the possibility of incidentally taking an ESA listed species and its associated liability ADF&G recommends that:

- Fishermen participating in area fisheries remain vigilant in monitoring gear when marine mammals may be present.
- Fishermen use avoidance measures (e.g., not fishing or relocating fishing activities when marine mammals are present or likely to be present) to minimize interactions with marine mammals.
- Avoid fishing in areas where marine mammals are likely to be present at night or when visibility or weather conditions make it difficult to spot marine mammals.

For further questions concerning marine mammal regulations call NMFS at 907-271-5006.